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By J. HOLLAND ROSE, Litt.D.

Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge.

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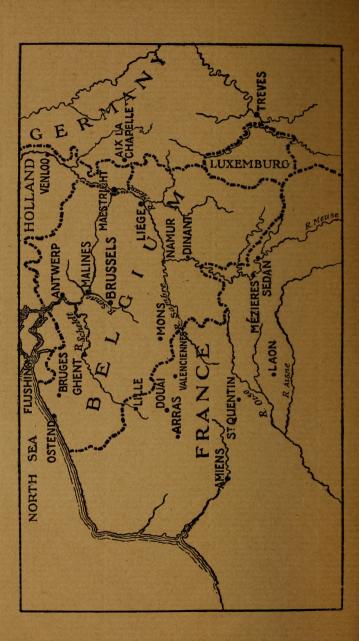
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PREFACE.

In this little book I have sought to teil simply and shortly the story of a great and complex crisis. It deeply concerns the Continental peoples and also our own people. Therefore, I have explained how we acted in time past when a somewhat similar crisis was at hand. But now the cause is greater and nobler than it was even in the days of Queen Elizabeth and of William III. May the boys and girls of Great Britain and Ireland, and of the Britains beyond the seas, realise this.

J. H. R.

Cambridge, October 9, 1914.

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HOW THE WAR CAME ABOUT

CHAPTER I.

THE WARS OF 1814 AND 1914.

You have heard that this terrible war between Great Britain and Germany began when the German troops in immense numbers invaded Belgium. They did so because their ruler. Kaiser William II., and his Ministers believed that to be the best and quickest way of striking at France. They probably argued thus: "On the French-Belgian frontier France has only one fortress of much account-namely, Maubeuge: while on the French-German frontier further east she has three very strong fortresses connected by numerous forts. Therefore, the way through Belgium is not only the shortest way from North Germany to Paris, but it is by far the easiest; and, if we strike at Paris quickly and with very large forces, we shall get there before her ally, Russia, is ready to invade our eastern provinces. If Great Britain objects to our invading Belgium, we can settle accounts with her at London."

Such seem to have been the thoughts of the Kaiser and military men at Berlin. The German Chancellor has admitted that Germany's invasion of a neutral land like Belgium was wrong; for in 1839 Germany, as well as France, Great Britain and all the Great Powers, had

promised by treaty not to trespass on Belgian soil even in time of war. Later on I will try to describe the offers by which they tried to persuade us to stand aside and do nothing, while they invaded Belgium and took unfair advantage of France. But, before we come to the direct causes of our war with Germany and Austria, let us look back at our history and see whether British rulers ever have consented to stand aside and see a great conquering Power

overrun Belgium.

If you look at the map you will see that Belgium and her neighbour, Holland, are opposite our south-east and east coasts; and it is on that side that we can most easily be invaded, if our Navy is defeated, or if it has to go far away on urgent duties. Napoleon the Great said that the Great Power which possessed Antwerp would hold a pistol at the head of England; and the saying is entirely true even to-day. Antwerp is opposite the mouth of the Thames; and Antwerp, and the Dutch ports-Flushing, Rotterdam and Amsterdampossess vast numbers of ships which might be used for an expedition against us over the generally calm waters of the North Sea. An expedition from the North of France across the choppy seas of the English Channel is more difficult; and a landing is rather easier on our east coast than on our south coast.

For these reasons Napoleon wished to make use of Antwerp and the Dutch ports in order to help on an invasion of the south-east of England. That is why he strengthened the fortifications of Antwerp and of the Dutch strongholds. In fact, in the spring of the year 1814 he refused to consider the giving up of Holland and Bel-

gium. Even when he was hard pressed by us and our Allies, he said he would rather give up all the French colonies than Antwerp. We, on the contrary, insisted that he should give up all Holland and Belgium; for we knew that we should never be safe while he held the harbours and inlets from Amsterdam on the north to Antwerp and Ostend on the south. Therefore, the war went on to the end in 1814, largely because Napoleon was determined to retain the Dutch and Belgian Netherlands; while we and our Allies were equally determined to dislodge him. After his first abdication he succeeded in regaining power at Paris; and his first effort in the campaign of 1815 was to try to seize Brussels and Antwerp. Wellington and Blücher met him at Waterloo; and he was overthrown there, in the very land where myriads of men have recently fallen, and where myriads had fallen in earlier wars in the effort to gain the mastery of the Netherlands.

Let us now try to understand why we fought so hard and so long to deprive Napoleon of the Netherlands. (We must notice that that was the name given to the lands now generally called Holland and Belgium.) Firstly, these lands, though they are small, are very fertile. The soil brought down by the three chief rivers (the Rhine, the Meuse and the Scheldt) is exceedingly rich. So, there are many wealthy towns and vast numbers of prosperous villages; and the abundance of money and food has always tempted powerful neighbours to send in their armies. Campaigns, especially in Belgium, are fairly easy to wage, because the invaders can live on the country and extort large sums of money and great

quantities of food, as the Germans have done. Then again, Holland and the greater part of Belgium form the western portion of the North German plain; and the middle part of the valley of the Meuse, between Liége, Namur and Dinant, provides the easiest and quickest way of marching from North Germany into the North of France. Therefore, time after time great generals have sought to conquer and hold

Belgium.

But Holland and Belgium are also great commercial countries. Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Antwerp and Ostend are very important harbours; and there are many other inlets which might become important in the hands of a great naval Power. The commerce of the first three of the ports just named is enormous. They are situated on or near the mouths of the rivers Rhine. Meuse and Scheldt: and the goods that come down these rivers are there placed on ships and sent overseas. Those harbours also import much of what the people of North and Central Europe want. Therefore. their merchants compete keenly with our merchants. We do not fear their competition so long as it is anything like fair competition; but we have reason to think that if Germany acquires those ports, she will use them unfairly and endeavour to ruin our commerce. Napoleon sought by all the means in his power to do so; and the Germans have of late been almost slavishly copying his policy and his methods. Further, as he often made use of merchant and fishing vessels in his schemes for invading England, so the Germans would do if ever they possessed the ports from Amsterdam to Ostend. Therefore, the ownership of the

Dutch and Belgian Netherlands is for us not only a question of commerce, but also one of national safety. We wish them to belong to their own people—firstly, because only so can there be peace and quietness in those lands; and, secondly, because only so can we ourselves live in peace and quietness.

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CHAPTER II.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NETHERLANDS.

Now let us take a glance backwards over the earlier part of our history, and we shall see that the war which we are now waging is not on behalf of a new-fangled notion. The independence of the Belgians and Dutch has been a matter of concern to every British ruler who had our interests at heart. That independence has been in turn threatened by the French, the Spaniards, again by the French, and now, lastly, by the Germans. If we go as far back as the reign of Edward I., we find that he tried to prevent the French conquering the people of Flanders (the west part of what we now call Belgium). In fact, the greatest naval battle of the Plantagenet period was fought by his sailors against the French off the Flemish town of Sluys (1337). Far more important was the help given by our people to the Netherlanders in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. At that time the Spaniards were very powerful; they possessed Flanders, and tried hard to reconquer the Dutch provinces, which had revolted because of the cruel religious persecutions. For some time "Good Queen Bess" would not help the Flemings and Dutch, for she had too much on her hands in England; when the Spaniards conquered Antwerp and seemed about to overrun all Holland, she sent soldiers to fight against them. Then Philip II. of Spain prepared "the Invincible Armada" for the invasion of England. He ordered that great fleet to sail up the English Channel and anchor off the Flemish coast, and there to take on board the Spanish veterans commanded by the Duke of Parma. These troops were to conquer our land. The plan failed because the Spanish ships were worsted and scattered off the Flemish coast; but if they could have embarked Parma's troops we should have been in great danger.

James I. and Charles I. took no interest whatever in the brave struggles of the men of the Netherlands for freedom; but our people did, and sent large numbers of volunteers to help them. Cromwell, too, made war against Spain, not only in the West Indies but also in Flanders. Fighting side by side with the French, the British red-coats overthrew the best troops of

Spain at the Battle of the Dunes (1658).

After that time the power of Spain declined, and she ceased to be the chief danger to us. But a new Power arose—France. Under her able and ambitious King, Louis XIV., she threatened to conquer all neighbouring States; and, as usual, the conqueror sought to acquire the Netherlands. For a time, our selfish and mean-spirited King, Charles II., helped him against the Dutch; but, later on, all patriotic Englishmen rejoiced when we became allies of the Dutch against the French. The Prince of Orange became our King, William III.; and in several long campaigns British and Dutch and other troops sought to keep the French out of the Netherlands. Some of the battles were fought at or near Mons and Namur, which have again become household words. William III. found it very hard work to resist the large and well-equipped armies of France; but he held on with wonderful firmness, and he saved the Protestant faith and the British

and Dutch peoples from grave dangers.

His successor, Queen Anne, soon had to face the same peril; but her very able General, the Duke of Marlborough, with the help of our Allies, overthrew the French in four great battles. Three of them (Ramillies, Oudenarde, and Malplaquet) were fought near to the battlefields of the present war; and the exploits of Marlborough ended the efforts of Louis XIV. to conquer the Netherlands. Nevertheless, his successor, Louis XV., set about the same task; and his troops, after defeating ours at Fontenoy in 1745, overran Belgium and parts of Holland. Now, note what followed. Our victories in North America and India enabled us to make a bargain with him. We restored to France what we had conquered in North America and India if she would give back Holland and Belgium to their former rulers, who were friendly to us. Of course, our merchants and colonists grumbled at this bargain; but George II. and his Ministers thought more about keeping Belgium and Holland in the hands of friends than about acquiring more land in North America and India. Once again (1787) we intervened in Dutch affairs so as to keep France from gaining complete control there.

But soon there began the worst struggle of all—the great war with France. It broke out between us and the French Republicans in 1793 because they insisted on interfering with the Dutch Republic, which was then our ally. The campaigns lasted, with only two short intervals, until the Battle of Waterloo; and, as we have seen, the campaigns of 1814 and 1815 were

fought mainly in order to decide the ownership of the Netherlands.

That was the last time that the independence of Belgium and Holland was seriously threatened by French armies. In order to prevent all risk of interference by France, the Great Powers united Belgium and Holland in one kingdom, so as to make what is called a "buffer-State"; but the Dutch and Belgians could not work well together, and in 1830-2 Belgium won her independence. In 1839 all the Great Powers agreed by treaty to respect her independence, and not to trespass upon her territory in time of war.

Thus, it seemed at last that Belgium was safe. For ages she had been called "the cockpit of Europe"—that is, the place where the fighting cocks strove to beat each other and rule the roost. But, to the surprise and indignation of the world, Belgium has now been invaded by the Germans: her fruitful fields have been laidwaste; her towns have been pillaged; her people have been most cruelly treated; and many of her historic monuments have been burnt to the ground by a nation which claims to be the most cultured in the world. Let us try to understand how these horrors have come to pass in an age which we all hoped was going to witness the triumph of the arts of peace.

CHAPTER III.

THE CAUSES OF DISPUTE.

For many years there have been two great causes of disturbance on the Continent of Europe. These were, first, the rivalry of Germany and France; second, the troublous state of the Balkan peoples. The first turns chiefly on what is called the Alsace-Lorraine Question; the second is called the Eastern Question. Let us see how these two problems have started the disputes that made the present war.

I. Alsace and Lorraine are two provinces which have often been striven for by the French and the Germans. Nearly all Alsace is peopled by Germans; nearly the whole of Lorraine is French in race. Now, it is not easy to divide those provinces according to race and language for the people of Alsace, though German by descent and German in language, love France fervently.* They belonged to her for about two centuries, until Germany annexed them in 1871. In that year Germany also annexed the northeast part of Lorraine, most of which had been French for about the same length of time. But both the German-speaking Alsacians and the French-speaking peoples of the east of Lorraine dislike German rule. were forcibly taken over by the newlyformed German Empire in 1871,

^{*} See the interesting novels of Erckmann-Chatrian, "The Conscript" and "Madame Thérèse."

France had suffered a crushing defeat. The reason for that dislike will be clear to all of you who, not long ago, read about the overbearing treatment of the inhabitants of Zabern in Alsace by young German officers, whose conduct was approved by their Government. Metz, a French-speaking city, is the chief fortress of the south-west of Germany; and the sight of a large number of French people harshly ruled by German officials has long caused very sore feelings. France has always hoped to regain those lost provinces; and Germany's fear of a French war of revenge has increased since the years 1894-5, when Russia became the ally of the

French Republic.

In 1879 Germany had secured the alliance of Austria, and in 1882 that of Italy, thus forming the Triple Alliance. But she felt uneasy at the Franco-Russian Alliance, and did all she could to sever it. In this she failed; but her tone in European affairs became so threatening as to arouse fear that, at the first opportunity, she would try to overthrow France and Russia. This was especially the case after Russia was worsted by Japan in the Far East. The Triple Alliance carried matters with a high hand on three occasions. Firstly, in 1908, when Austria annexed Bosnia; secondly, in 1911, when disputes arose between Germany and France about Morocco; thirdly, in 1912–13, when the Eastern Question seemed likely to bring about a general

II. We must now see how the Eastern Question brought about war in the East of Europe, and then we shall look at the causes that spread war to the West of Europe.

By the Eastern Question we mean the disputes

that have long been raging between the Turks and their former Christian subjects, also the disputes between those subjects themselves. It is a very long and difficult matter to trace: but we need notice only these main facts-

(a) Though the Turks used to be called "the scourge of Christendom," yet they have long been losing their hold on the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula. In 1876-7 Russia nearly drove them out of Europe: she would have taken Constantinople if we and Austria had not threatened her. Matters were patched up by the Congress of Berlin in 1878; and the little peoples of the Balkans were bitterly disappointed that they did not get more land from Turkey.

(b) Those little peoples were the Greeks, the Serbians, the Bulgarians, and the Roumanians. The last three belong more or lesss closely to the Slav race. Russia is a great Slav Empire. and wished to make Serbia and Bulgaria powerful. But all that Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria wanted was to be left alone. They hoped in course of time to overcome Turkey; and in 1912 they succeeded in doing so by heroic efforts which won the admiration of the whole world.

(c) Alas! In 1913 they quarrelled among themselves about the division of the lands they had conquered from the Turks. It is nearly certain that Austria egged them on to this quarrel. She did not want to see them form a strong league, because that would stop her designs.

(d) Those designs were, that she should become the chief Power in the Balkan Peninsula, and should possess harbours in Albania and Macedonia. The harbours she wanted most were Avlona and Salonica. She has long coveted Salonica, because it has a fine harbour and would be a capital place for her commerce with the East. She was therefore greatly annoyed in 1913 when Serbia extended her borders near to Salonica, and Greece actually

acquired that port.

(e) The Austrian Empire has other causes of quarrel with Serbia. That little kingdom hopes to win back some of the people of the south of that Empire, who are Serbs by race and have long been oppressed. Serbia also was very indignant in 1908 when Austria annexed the large province of Bosnia; for that, too, is peopled mainly by Serbs. Russia, France and Great Britain protested against that annexation; but the Germans backed up Austria, and she had her way. So indignant, too, were the Serbs at Austria's opposition in 1913, that two of them, who were subjects of Austria, resolved to murder the Archduke, Francis Ferdinand, the heir to the Austrian Crown. They did so on June 28, 1914, during his visit to Serajevo, the capital of Bosnia. This abominable crime started the crisis which led up to the war.

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CHAPTER IV.

GREAT BRITAIN AND GERMANY.

We have now seen why Germany and France were on bad terms, and why Austria was on bad terms both with Russia and Serbia. But we have now to try and understand why Great

Britain went to war with Germany.

We talk about the British Empire and the German Empire. But they are as different as they can be. The British Empire is a union of free Commonwealths in different parts of the world, which have no ties except those of kinship and love of freedom. About 140 years ago, our great thinker, Burke, wrote thus when we were in danger of losing the North American colonies: "My hold of the colonies is in the close affection which grows from common names, from kindred blood, from similar privileges, and equal protection. These are ties which though light as air, are as strong as links of iron." These noble sentences were, unhappily, not true then; but they are true to-day. Our Parliament has no means of compelling Canada, South Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand, and the British West Indies to come to our assistance in this war. But, of their own free will and deep affection for the Motherland, they have offered to us their sons, their wealth, their produce, in overflowing measure. The vision, which Burke saw in the dim distance, has come to be a splendid reality.

It has come true because we helped those Commonwealths in the time of childhood and youth, and we have not interfered with them when they came of age. They are Britains beyond the seas. The case of India is different: for India includes scores of peoples of diverse races and creeds, and they do not understand our Western ways of self-government. Therefore we govern them; but we try to do so justly and for their good; and in this time of trial they have shown a depth of loyalty and affection which has touched our hearts. Let us hope that the services of men and treasure which India has freely offered will bring her and us into a more complete sympathy; for there is nothing like standing together shoulder to shoulder in time of danger to make people close friends.

The British Empire, then, is a union of peoples held together by common interest and affection. The Motherland does much for the defence of the Commonwealths beyond the seas; she provides an immensely expensive navy, and she does not compel them to pay their full share towards its upkeep. She leaves it to their sense of duty and honour to help in this matter. They appreciate this liberty very much. For we Britons dislike compulsion, and we prefer to do things of our own accord. This is especially true of our Commonwealths beyond the seas. All the same, the looseness of the ties uniting our Empire is a danger; and we shall do well to think carefully about this danger when the war is over.

For there is no doubt that in time of war the German Empire is far stronger than the British Empire. Let us try to understand what the

German Empire is. It is a union of States, which, taken singly, used to be too weak to stand alone. The chief of them, the Kingdom of Prussia, became powerful by means of successful wars waged against its neighbours; and in 1870-1 that kingdom and the other German States, after beating France, formed the German Empire. War made the Prussian monarchy what it is; and the war of 1870-1 made the German Empire what it is. The King of Prussia is German Emperor (Kaiser). He has very wide powers. He controls the army, the navy, foreign policy, and the administration generally. The Chancellor and the Ministers of State are responsible to him alone; that is, they need not answer to the German Parliament (Reichstag) for their acts. He and they can act in defiance of the will of the Parliament.

Thus, the German Empire is not what we should call a completely free country; for the will of the people does not necessarily prevail over the will of the Emperor and his Ministers, and he and they keep a very tight hold over the people in many ways. In 1866 the King of Prussia made war on Austria against the will of his Parliament; and. though the German people seem at present to agree with the Kaiser in this war, yet they have no control over his conduct of affairs. He and his chief advisers decide everything; and among those advisers the chiefs of the German army and navy have an immense influence. That is what we mean when we speak of militarism in Germany. Militarism is the spirit or influence exerted by a powerful set of generals. For some years it has prevailed in Germany

and the influence of civilians has counted for little.

The military men have argued in this way. They have said: "The Prussian army made Prussia what she was-a successful and growing State. Prussia made Germany what she is to-day-a powerful and prosperous Empire. Our merchants and manufacturers have done much; but the greatness of the Empire is due to its army. We Germans must make it as strong as possible, so as to be able to meet both Russia and France." And to this both the military and naval men have added: "We must have a powerful navy, so as to be able to meet Great Britain at sea and contest with her the mastery of the seas. Germany must become the World-Empire in place of Great Britain."

Very many Germans, even those who are not warlike by nature, have been won over to these views. They say that the German people are increasing very fast-in fact, faster than any people in Europe except the Russians. Therefore, Germany must have more elbow-room. She is hemmed in between France, Austria, Russia, and the sea: France and Russia are hostile. She must, therefore, expand across the sea, or through Austria southwards. Now, she cannot send her children across the seas in large numbers to her own colonies: for those colonies are almost entirely in the tropics, where white men cannot live and bring up families. German emigrants go mostly to the United States, or to British colonies; and there they are lost to "the Fatherland." This, say German patriots, is intolerable. Germany must have a great colonial Empire; and to gain this she must

fight Great Britain, which in earlier and easier

times acquired the best colonising lands.

There is some force in these arguments. But we must remember that in, and after, 1881, when Germany began acquiring colonies, we did not oppose her except at a few vital points like South Africa; and there we let her annex land north of the Orange River. She soon built up

a colonial empire of no small extent.

Indeed, in the year 1890 we came to an agreement with the present Kaiser, William II., whereby he acquired large tracts in East Africa and elsewhere, besides gaining the island of Heligoland from us. This proves that we have not stood in the way of Germany, but have allowed her to expand wherever she could do so without damaging our interests too much. Further, the British Empire does not exclude German trade. We admit it on most favourable terms. Germany, however, refuses to meet our traders in the same open-handed way, and places high duties on our goods. But in nearly every quarter of the world we throw open our ports to her products. and we admit her traders to share in our trade on equal terms. There are some British ports, especially Singapore, where German merchants are nearly as numerous as our own. Therefore, Germany has no cause for grumbling at us.

The motto of the British Empire is "Live, and let live." It is not a close preserve kept to ourselves; it is a free and hospitable community where all peoples share alike on equal terms. French Canadians, the Dutch Boers of South Africa, the Maories of New Zealand—these and many other peoples live happily under the British flag. If Germans do not wish to go to their own colonies, why should they not settle

contentedly under our flag? We won our colonies in fair fight, and we mean to keep them, though not in any close and niggardly spirit. We have thrown open our doors to the Germans, and until recently there were large numbers of them living peaceably among us.

CHAPTER V.

GERMAN AMBITIONS.

But this state of things has not satisfied a section of the German people. It looks forward to a time when the free-and-easy British must give way before the pushing Germans. Certainly the Germans are well educated, intelligent. and hard-working. They also prepare very carefully for future events. In these respects they excel us; for we are much too apt to think that things will turn out "all right." Those who rely on that often find things turn out all

wrong.

Now, there has arisen a party in Germany which builds its hopes on the carefulness of the Germans and the carelessness of the British. This party calls itself "Pan-German," or "All-German." They want to unite the Germans everywhere, both in their Empire and in that of Austria, and to make use of other branches of their great family, especially the Dutch and the Flemings. (If they can make use of Norwegians and Swedes, so much the better, they say.) A union of all these peoples is to be brought about either by consent or by force; and the united family is to press on to a great future.

The most ardent of the "Pan Germans" insist that, when the time for action has fully come, Germany must absorb Belgium and Holland. From the rich Belgian land she will overrun and crush France. Then from the Dutch, the Belgian, and the French ports she will attack Great Britain with every hope of success. These writers point out that in 1803-5 Napoleon failed to reach the English coast because he had to rely on sails and oars; but Germany will have an immense number of steamers ready to convey an army of picked troops. By means of submarines and mines she will destroy many of our warships. Then, in a decisive battle at sea, she will make use of Zeppelin airships to destroy as many of our *Dreadnoughts* as possible, and her battleships will dispose of the remainder. That done, Great Britain will be at her mercy; and the British Empire will have had its day.

Such is the scheme of the leading Pan-Germans. They rely largely upon new destructive machines—mines at sea, submarines, and Zeppelin airships. Besides, there have been constructed secretly at Krupp's works at Essen a large number of immense siege-cannon, far more destructive than any guns yet designed; and the German generals had good ground for believing that these enormous guns would

demolish the strongest forts ever built.

Further, they have tried to make all their people believe that Germany must expand or perish; and that it is better to wage even an unsuccessful war than to sit still and see Russia and Great Britain grow stronger and richer. They forget that they also were growing stronger and richer, and that the British Empire was ready to trade fairly with them. They have argued as though our prosperity injured them; but, as far back as 1776, Adam Smith taught that the prosperity of any one nation was a help to its neighbours, and that the whole world ought to become one market for the friendly exchange of goods. The Pan-Germans have

forgotten all this, and have gone back to the old and mischievous notion, that all great

trading nations are necessarily enemies.

Of course, there are many Germans who are wiser than that; but the "Pan-Germans" got the ear of the public. Even the professors of the German Universities have long been teaching that Great Britain was their worst enemy; and the merchants and traders have come to believe that the only way to get great wealth was by bringing about our ruin and that of France. Their plan was that Austria should extend her sway down south to Salonica and the ports of Albania. She would then control he Balkan Peninsula; and the railways from Austria-Hungary to Salonica and Constantihople would carry the riches of Central Europe to Asia Minor. Germany has worked hard to construct or control a railway from the Bosphorus right through Asia Minor as far as the Persian Gulf. She made friends with that bloodthirsty Sultan, Abdul Hamid II., in order to get permission for this line and for other trade concessions; and she hoped that, when Austria had seized Salonica, the two Germanic Empires would control the trade of the Balkans, of Asia Minor, and of the Persian Gulf.

The Pan-German enthusiasts hoped before very long to turn us out of India. At any rate, they expected confidently to make Antwerp on the north-west, and Salonica on the south-east, the chief harbours for an All-German dominion, which would control the Continent, and finally control the world. They have studied the career of Napoleon the Great, and they intended to improve upon it at several points. Certainly they had ready to hand engineering and

mechanical appliances of which he knew nothing. All these were to be pressed into their service. So confident were they that one of their chief spokesmen, General von Bernhardi, wrote in his book, "Germany and the Next War" (which is this war), that Great Britain was their chief enemy; and he added these words respecting all attempts at friendlier relations between the two lands: "We (i.e., the Germans) may at most use them to delay the necessary and inevitable war, until we may fairly imagine we have some prospect of success."

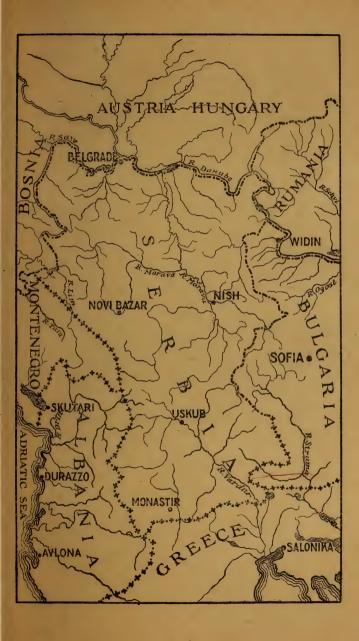
That prospect of success seemed to offer itself in the summer of 1914. At midsummer Germany completed the widening and deepening of the Kiel and Elbe naval canal. This improvement enabled her to send her very largest warships quickly between the Baltic and North Seas; while, of course, all foreign ships have to go round by the north of Denmark. She, therefore, now has a great advantage over other fleets in those seas.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CRISIS IN JULY, 1914.

On the other hand, her rivals-France, Russia, and Great Britain-were in difficulties. In France there had been several changes of Ministry, which upset her administration: and it was known that the French army was not in a fit state for war. In Russia there was a general strike of the transport workers of the large cities, and this event seemed likely to delay the movement of troops. In our country, too, things looked very bad in June-July, 1914. Ireland appeared to be on the brink of civil war, and our army was reported to be far below its proper strength. These special circumstances undoubtedly encouraged the military party at Berlin to go ahead. On July 26 the German Ambassador at Vienna stated confidently that Russia would not prevent Austria chastising Serbia; and he added "France was in no condition for facing a war."

Why did Austria want to chastise Serbia? We now come back to the Eastern Question. Those two States had long been on very bad terms; and the murder of the Austrian Archduke, on June 28, 1914, led to Austria making very severe demands on the Serbian Government. Among other things, she asked that Government to admit Austrian judges to sit side by side with Serbian judges during the trial of Serbian subjects who were accused of helping on the murder of the Archduke. She



also asked it to let Austrian officials come and help in the affairs of Serbia. That first demand Serbia refused; but she said she would give way to the second so far as the public law of Europe would allow. On all other points in dispute Serbia gave way. Nevertheless, two days later (July 28) Austria declared war on Serbia. Thus, Austria started war in Europe.

Now, it is fairly certain that Germany had been egging her on. On July 26 the German Ambassador at Vienna told our Ambassador that Germany "knew very well what she was about in backing up Austria-Hungary in this matter." At Rome and Constantinople it was believed that Austria was going to subdue Serbia in order to seize Salonica, which is quite near the southern border of Serbia (see map).

Further, you must note this: On July 31 Austria seemed alarmed at the prospect of a war with the Russians, on which probably she had not reckoned. She tried to draw back: but on that very day Germany went full steam ahead. She sent to Russia and France the ultimatums which produced a general war. It is clear, then, that Germany was working behind Austria all the time, and pushed her on when she wanted to back out of the difficulties into which the politicians of Berlin had drawn her. We know much about this from the very full and clear accounts written by our Ambassadors to our Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Sir Edward Grey: and we know from his replies to them what he was trying to do. The rest of this little book is based on those documents, which have been published in our Government's "Blue Book" ("Correspondence respecting the European Crisis''). When you are older, you will be able to read and understand all those documents for yourselves. Indeed, our Government

has left them to speak for themselves.

What we want chiefly to know is this: Did our Government try to keep at peace with Germany as long as was possible? Or did it (as the Germans try to make out) strike Germany in the back?

Now, on this question the evidence is clear. Austria took all the steps that first brought about war; and Germany backed her up and then pushed her on. The British Government also tried to persuade Austria and Germany not to make war. On July 20 Sir Edward Grey urged the German Ambassador in London to advise his Government to try and tone down the demands which it was believed Austria was going to make on Serbia. Then, when those demands were known to be so severe that Serbia could not accept them, Sir Edward Grey sought to prevent war coming about between Russia and Austria. For this purpose he advised that Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy should send representatives to a conference. There they were to try and soothe down their Allies. That is to say, we and France were to try and moderate the annoyance of our friend, Russia: while Germany and Italy (the Allies of Austria) were to try to persuade her not to push Serbia to extremities. If this conference had been held, war might have been avoided. France, Russia and Italy agreed to this proposal of a conference. But on July 28 Germany refused to accept that plan. She gave most insufficient reasons for her refusal. You will remember that July 28 was the day on which Austria declared war on Serbia. It is clear that

Germany did not want peace, else she would not have refused the means which Great Britain and the other Powers proposed for preventing war.

Kaiser William now tried hard to keep the Tsar Nicholas of Russia from helping little Serbia. On July 28 the Kaiser sent a long telegram to the Tsar urging him not to make common cause with the murderers of a prince. In his reply of July 29 the Tsar paid no attention to this appeal; for by this time the existence of Serbia was at stake. He therefore replied that he and all Russians were deeply indignant at Austria's unprovoked attack upon Serbia. On that same day he ordered the mobilisation of his troops in the south and east of Russia. He did so only in those parts, because they are near Austria, and he wanted to warn her not to invade Serbia. Those parts are not near Germany, and he did not want to offend or alarm Germany. Again the Kaiser telegraphed in the same terms to the Tsar, who replied as he had done before. Neither could convince the other; but it is clear that the Kaiser hoped still to persuade the Tsar to stand aside and do nothing.

Meanwhile Germany was making hurried and secret preparations for war both on her eastern frontier, which faces Russia, and on her western frontier, which faces France and Belgium. She was known to be better prepared for war than either France or Russia; and events were soon to prove that this was so. Therefore, on July 31, Russia mobilised all her troops. At once Germany sent imperious demands both to Russia and France to cease all preparations for war, else she would make war on them. Russia

refused this demand on July 31; France a little later.

Thus, war came about between Germany and her neighbours on the east and the west. It is nearly certain that she hoped to keep Russia quiet for a little time until she had struck down the French people. Her chief preparations were against France and Belgium. She was not so well prepared on the side of Russia; and the Russian troops moved more quickly than the statesmen of Berlin had expected. This was one of the mistakes of the Kaiser and his advisers.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CRISIS IN JULY, 1914 (continued).

We must now go back to July 20, so as to see what was taking place between the British and German Governments. Late on that day the German Chancellor, who is next in importance to the Kaiser, sent for the British Ambassador at Berlin, and made certain proposals to him. He stated that war might come about between Germany and France; and he said he knew that we would never allow France to be crushed in such a war. He therefore invited us to remain neutral (that is, to take no part in the war), provided that Germany annexed none of the land of France. Our Ambassador then asked whether this remark applied also to the French colonies; but the Chancellor replied that he could not give any assurance about Germany not taking them. He then said that Germany would not interfere with Holland.

Then came the most important part of his proposals. He asked that we should remain neutral, even though Germany might send her troops through Belgium to attack France. He put the proposal in this way: He said that, as France was likely to send her troops through Belgium, Germany must do so; and if Belgium did not resist the Germans, they would restore to her her independence and all her lands at the end of the war.

By this way of putting it he sought to throw on France the blame for what was going to happen in Belgium. But you must notice that, when Sir Edward Grey asked France if she would keep her troops out of Belgium, she at once said she would. Indeed, Germany only used this as an excuse for doing what she had long intended to do. Her soldiers were provided with excellent maps of Belgium; the best positions for artillery around the Belgian forts were accurately known; and Krupp, the manufacturer of German cannon, long delayed sending the heavy guns which Belgium had ordered for completing the defences of Antwerp.

Then, again, you should notice how craftily the German Chancellor put his proposal about restoring the independence of Belgium at the end of the war. The Belgians were only to be free again if they had not resisted the Germans. But what people would not resist so brutal an aggression? The Germans probably counted on their resistance; and this was to be an excuse for annexing the land, whose neutrality they had so wantonly outraged. Remember that this is one of the objects for which the Allies are fighting. They are resolved to restore the independence of Belgium. Germany is fighting desperately in order to seize Antwerp and Ostend. We have seen that she values those ports highly, because they would enable her more easily to strike at England.

Our Ambassador at Berlin reported these proposals of the German Chancellor to Sir Edward Grey, who sent a firm refusal. No British Minister could do anything else; for it would have been unspeakably mean for us to allow Germany to invade Belgium, whose independence we had sworn to uphold. In fact, it is difficult to see why the German

Government made those insulting proposals to us. Perhaps those Ministers thought that, as we were in for a civil war in Ireland, we would accept any excuse for keeping out of a Continental war. If so, it only shows how selfconfident the Germans were, and how they despised us. Or, perhaps, they believed that we might come into the Continental war, but in so weak a fashion that they would soon be able to crush us, after they had dealt with France. Of course, we do not know the inmost secrets of the ruling class at Berlin-but we may be sure that they were filled with the confident hope that Russia would act slowly; that Great Britain would act weakly; and that they would have time to settle matters with France.

By July 31 it was clear that Germany was intent upon invading Belgium, whatever we might say or do. On that day our Ambassador at Berlin asked the German Minister for Foreign Affairs to say distinctly that Germany would not take that step. But he refused to give any answer; because any answer "could not but disclose a certain amount of their plan of campaign in the event of war ensuing." No answer was given to our request. True, on the next day the German Ambassador at London made some well-meaning offers; but they were so different from the tone employed by his chiefs at Berlin that Sir Edward Grev took little notice of them. In such a case attention is paid only to the words of the chiefs; for, if a subordinate person uses different words, he must either be ignorant of the intentions of his chiefs, or he must be trying to deceive. The first was the case with the German Ambassador in London, who was a kindly man, but out of touch with the Kaiser and Chancellor at Berlin.

He has since been disgraced by them.

On August 2 the British Government assured the French Ambassador in London that, if the German fleet attacked that of France or the coasts of France, we would help her; but he was careful to add that this promise would be made good only if our Parliament approved it. By so doing he took the course which a constitutional Minister ought to take. In fact. throughout all this difficult time Sir Edward Grey showed a keen desire for peace, and also the prudence and caution of a constitutional Minister. He stated more than once that we should not draw the sword on account of Serbia: for that was not our quarrel, but Russia's quarrel. He has also made it clear that we were not drawn into war with Germany owing to our "cordial understanding" with France; for that understanding only dealt with naval matters, and they did not lead us into war.

It is also quite clear that neither Russia nor France wanted war. They accepted war with Germany and Austria when those Powers showed that they were bent on war. But all who have studied these matters know that Russia and France tried to avoid hostilities so long as they could do so with honour. But Russia could not, without loss of honour, see Serbia overrun by Austrian armies; and France could not avoid war when Germany imperiously

ordered her to disarm.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WAR AND WHAT IT MAY BRING.

The rupture between Great Britain and Germany came about at the end of August 4. On the day before, the King of the Belgians made a solemn appeal to King George, urging him to safeguard the independence of Belgium, which was then in danger. In 1870, during the Franco-German War, we had promised to do so; and now the case was equally strong. The British Government decided to stand fast by our engagement of the year 1839. Therefore, on August 4 Sir Edward Grey sent to Berlin a note stating that the Germans had invaded Belgian territory, though France had promised not to do so. He demanded that Germany should withdraw her forces, as she was in honour bound to do. If she refused Great Britain would endeavour to make her respect her pledges of the year 1839. As Germany persisted in violating those pledges, war broke out between her and Great Britain at midnight of August 4-5.

The Germans have striven hard to mislead public opinion in their own land and in America as to the cause of this war. They have said that we suddenly struck her in the back when she was already at war. Or, again, they have said that we suddenly made war on her for the sake of capturing her colonies and her trade. Both charges are false, as you will now have seen. Austria and Germany started the general war. Austria did so because Germany backed

her up, and led her to hope for ascenda cy in the Balkan Peninsula and the acquisition of the trade of Salonica and the wealth of the Levant. Then, on July 31, when Austria suddenly found that she was face to face with a Russian war, and wanted to draw back, Germany made a general war inevitable by sending ultimatums to Petrograd (St. Petersburg) and Paris. As we have seen, she counted on the slowness of Russia or the reluctance of the Tsar to draw the sword on behalf of those whom she termed "Serbian assassins."

She was also resolved to overwhelm France: because France was ill-prepared for war, and the French Government had only recently returned from a voyage to Cronstadt. The Kaiser and his counsellors reckoned on "hewing their way" through Belgium in the hope of soon dictating peace at Paris. As to Great Britain, they despised her so much as to offer to her a bargain that was deeply insulting; and they seem to have been really surprised at our display of spirit in rejecting it with the scorn that it deserved. Even then, they persisted in their plan of marching through Belgium, though Sir Edward Grey protested against such a course of action. They, therefore, have to thank only themselves for having drawn upon their heads the hostility of the United Kingdom and the reprobation of the civilised world.

If German professors had studied our history with half the care which they have devoted to that of Napoleon, they would have seen that we have never allowed a great conqueror to annex the Dutch and Belgic Netherlands, and that we have fought long and *uinous wars rather

than see a powerful enemy encamped opposite the mouths of the Thames and the Humber. The same spirit is in the British nation to-day as was in our forefathers a century ago. Their example nerves us to go on in this struggle. We are waging it against an enemy as determined and as mighty as Napoleon the Great.

Our cause is worthier even than it was in 1814-15; for then the Belgians wished to have him as their ruler. Now they loathe the thought of having the Germans as their masters. We are, therefore, fighting not only for the security of Europe from a great conqueror, as was the case a century ago; we are fighting for the sake of the independence of the Belgians, who have wrought prodigies of valour in defence of their liberties. We are fighting for the security of the Dutch; for no one can doubt that the Dutch kingdom will be annexed by Germany if she succeeds in absorbing Belgium.

The freedom of Serbia and the Balkan peoples is also at stake in this mighty struggle, which stirs the emotions of mankind to their depths. Italy is looking on with bated breath; for she has watched carefully the beginnings of strife, and has seen that the two Germanic Empires are the aggressors. Therefore, she has parted company with them, formerly her Allies; and her sympathies are keenly with Great Britain.

France, and Russia.

There is therefore every reason why we should strive to the very utmost for victory. Very rarely do we put our whole strength into a Continental war; but whenever we have done so, we have ultimately prevailed. It was so in the time of William III., of Marlborough, of Nelson and Wellington. It

will be so again; and we may be sure that, after victory, our Government will endeavour to bring about a just and satisfactory peace—a peace founded on the desires of the peoples themselves. Europe will then be happier than it has been during many a year past; for it has cowered under the spectre of a threatening militarism. After the next great settlement it may well be that Europe will attain the happy condition of which Edmund Burke thus wrote: "The States of Europe lay happy under the shade of a great and free monarchy, which knew how to be great without endangering its own peace at home, or the internal or external peace of any of its neighbours."

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